

California State Parks’ Central Valley Vision

“This landscape is one of rolling hills and small drainages, and is basically untouched by development. It is teeming with vernal pools, wildlife and historic and prehistoric human artifacts. It is worth saving, if any place is.”

— *Public comment*



March 2006

*San Luis Reservoir
State Recreation Area*



Ruth Coleman, Director

Director's Message

The population of California's Great Central Valley is growing and changing like never before. As individuals, Central Valley residents are learning new technologies, attending new institutions of higher education, and diversifying their employment and economic opportunities. As a population, the numbers of Central Valley dwellers are expected to more than double by 2040, and include more ethnic diversity than many places in the nation.

California State Parks recognizes the importance of providing excellent service to the residents of the heartland of California, and has worked to identify strategies for meeting the dynamic needs of the Central Valley. In 2005 we took those strategies to the people and listened to what they had to say. Overall, public comments supported our strategies to increase and improve park and recreation services to residents and visitors. We heard enthusiastic testimony on the proud heritage, natural splendors, abundant recreational resources, and dynamic future of the Valley.

California State Parks looks forward to continuing to work with our many partners to implement improvements to the State Park System in the Central Valley. Please continue to consider how we can all contribute to the health, inspiration and education of all Californians by preserving what's best about the Central Valley for current and future generations.



Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park



Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area

"As Mayor of the largest city in the Central Valley, I am very pleased that California State Parks is taking a serious look at the future of the Valley resources and the long-term needs of Central Valley residents."

— Heather Fargo, Sacramento

Project Overview

Establishing the Vision—In 2003 California State Parks initiated an ambitious research effort to analyze gaps in park and recreational lands and services, and demand for specific services in the Central Valley. By collecting this information, California State Parks intended to better guide park acquisition and development activities over a long-term (20-year) planning horizon.

An oversight committee, consisting of various Central Valley leaders and advocates, was established to help guide the effort. Through their suggestions, it was determined that California State Parks can better serve the needs of Central Valley residents and visitors through a conscientious program of protecting lands and developing facilities at new and existing units. The following broad recommendations were proposed to guide the next phase of the project:

- Expand recreational facilities to accommodate larger families and groups in existing parks.
- Expand landholdings at existing parks and acquire new parklands along major river corridors.
- Acquire lands that preserve and protect vanishing natural resources.
- Better preserve and interpret the rich history associated with the Valley's past.

In 2004 the brochure, *California State Parks & the Great Central Valley*, was released. This publication outlined the initial project and its recommendations. *California State Parks & the Great Central Valley* can be accessed on the State Parks Web site at www.parks.ca.gov/centralvalley.

Bringing the Vision to the Public—In 2005 California State Parks sought feedback from the general public through an extensive outreach effort. This effort included 11 public meetings throughout the Central Valley, from Red Bluff to Bakersfield, and more than a dozen meetings requested by community interest groups. The public was also invited to submit their comments electronically. In response to these public comments, California State Parks formulated specific recommendations to begin to address identified issues and opportunities. A summary of the public comments is on page five.

Making it Happen: Implementation of State Parks' Recommendations—State Parks has identified short-term actions to pursue over the next five years. Highlighted examples can be found on pages six and seven. State Parks will continue to develop long-range goals over the next 20 years.



Caswell Memorial State Park



Sutter Buttes

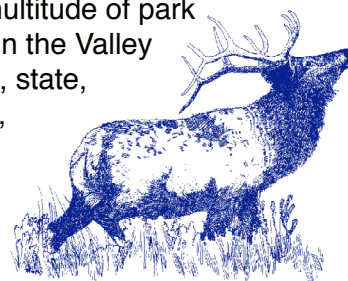
Defining the Central Valley

For this effort, the Central Valley is geographically defined by the mountains surrounding it, extending approximately from Redding in the north to the Tehachapi Mountains in the south, and from the valley floor up to approximately 2,000 feet in elevation along the Coast Range and along the Sierra Nevada. Collectively these 18 counties are home to 17 percent of the state's population, and account for 15 million acres (15 percent) of California's total acreage.

The Valley's natural resources are diverse and unique; some plant assemblages and animal species are found nowhere else in the world. Rivers and streams provide a cool respite for both people and animals during hot, dry summers, and host migratory birds in winter. In spring spectacular wildflower blooms dazzle lucky viewers.

The Valley's historic and cultural heritage is also rich and varied, ranging from the discovery of gold in the foothills to the growth of agriculture in the Valley; from the waves of immigrants to the tapestry of stories linked by Highway 99; and from the mysteries of prehistoric rock art sites to the legacy of the railroads.

These resources provide a multitude of park and recreation opportunities in the Valley and foothills nearby. Federal, state, and local parks, historic sites, museums, and open space areas provide opportunities for short day excursions and vacation destinations.



The Central Valley's State Park Units

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|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Shasta SHP | 13. State Capitol Museum | 19. Bethany Reservoir SRA |
| 2. William B. Ide Adobe SHP | Sutter's Fort SHP/ State Indian Museum | 20. Caswell Memorial SP |
| 3. Woodson Bridge SRA | Governor's Mansion SHP | 21. Carnegie SVRA |
| 4. Bidwell-Sacramento River SP | Old Sacramento SHP/ Railroad Museum | 22. Turlock Lake SRA |
| 5. Bidwell Mansion SHP | Leland Stanford Mansion SHP | 23. McConnell SRA |
| 6. Lake Oroville SRA | 14. Prairie City SVRA | 24. George J. Hatfield SRA |
| 7. Clay Pit SVRA | 15. Stone Lake | 25. Great Valley Grasslands SP |
| 8. Sutter Buttes | 16. Delta Meadows | 26. Pacheco SP |
| 9. Colusa-Sacramento River SRA | 17. Brannan Island SRA | 27. San Luis Reservoir SRA |
| 10. Woodland Opera House SHP | 18. Franks Tract SRA | 28. Millerton Lake SRA |
| 11. Folsom Lake SRA | | 29. Colonel Allensworth SHP |
| 12. Folsom Powerhouse SHP | | 30. Tule Elk SR |

What We Heard

Common concerns and recommendations emerged from the comments gathered during the public outreach effort.

The following were identified as primary needs:

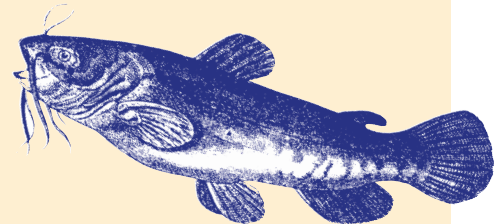
- Increase river access, including fishing areas, boat ramps, water trails, and entrance/egress areas for water recreation.
- Acquire land featuring oak woodlands, river access, and other high-demand sites threatened by development, while land is available and before prices skyrocket.
- Increase the number of camping facilities, including larger sites that can accommodate multi-family groups, and more amenity-rich alternative facilities such as cabins and tent cabins.
- Increase trail recreation opportunities, including trails along river corridors, trails that traverse the Central Valley and connect the ocean and Sierra Nevada, equestrian trails, and off-highway recreation areas.
- Increase education and interpretation of significant Central Valley stories, including immigrant history, the role and importance of agriculture, Native American history, Highway 99, Chinese communities, the impact of water development and use in the Central Valley, and the use of waterways as transportation corridors. The public also requested more visitor/welcome centers and interpretive signage and displays.
- Increase funding for operation and maintenance of local parks (regional, county and city). Many hoped to transfer local park lands to the State Park System due to lack of operating funds.



Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

“Now is the time to provide some recreation facilities—before it all becomes rooftops!”

— Public comment



2005 Public Meetings

April 27	-	Woodland
May 31	-	Fresno
June 1	-	Sacramento
June 8	-	Chico
Sept. 13	-	Isleton
Sept. 14	-	Bakersfield
Sept. 15	-	Madera
Sept. 19	-	Red Bluff
Sept. 20	-	Modesto
Sept. 21	-	Atwater
Sept. 27	-	Stockton



Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park

Progress and Continued Activities

Since the initiation of the Central Valley Vision, California State Parks has responded to needs identified by the public with projects like the following:

Expand Recreational Facilities. In response to changing demographics and demand, State Parks is identifying opportunities to increase high-quality, in-demand recreational facilities.

- State Parks is partnering with the Department of Boating and Waterways to develop **boat launches** and day-use facilities at numerous Central Valley state parks.
- State Parks has researched and developed guidelines for implementing **alternative camping facilities** (such as cabins and tent cabins) in state parks.

Expand Land Holdings. State Parks seeks to identify and prioritize properties that feature threatened natural resources, cultural resources, and multiple active or passive recreational opportunities. State Parks is also considering acquisition of adjacent properties that buffer protected natural resource areas from encroaching incompatible uses, connecting existing state parks to other protected public lands, and providing significant additional recreational opportunities.

- State Parks is partnering with Kern County and the City of Bakersfield to identify and develop an **off-highway vehicle recreation area**.
- State Parks acquired nearly 1,800 acres in the Peace Valley of the Sutter Buttes, protecting unique natural and cultural resources.

Preserve and Interpret Unique Cultural Resources and Stories. State Parks is investigating opportunities to increase preservation and interpretation of the many stories of California.

- State Parks is working with Caltrans and the Great Valley Center to develop interpretive programs to tell the many stories of the **Highway 99 corridor**.
- State Parks is developing a plan to increase preservation of **agricultural** history and interpretation of the role of agriculture in California.
- State Parks is collecting and preserving oral histories of the residents of the historic **Chinese immigrant and Chinese-American community of Locke** in the Delta.

“The Central Valley has its own unique features that warrant a visit and protection in their own right.”

— Public comment



Folsom Lake State Recreation Area



Grinding rock at Sutter Buttes

What's Next

A wide variety of potential projects that increase and improve services to Central Valley residents and visitors has been identified. For example, State Parks is pursuing the following in the near term as funding becomes available:

- Identify and prioritize **areas with greatest need** for parks, and best opportunities, along **river corridors** in particular.
- Provide **technical assistance** to local partners, including training in grant writing.
- Increase **community involvement programs** in the Central Valley in order to improve access to park and recreation programs.

Over the next few years, and as funding becomes available, State Parks intends to:

- Continue working with partners to develop boat access and visitor facilities in Central Valley state parks, including along the **Sacramento River**.
- Identify locations and funding to develop **alternative camping facilities** (e.g., cabins and tent cabins), multi-family campsites and picnic areas.
- Update and add natural and cultural resource **educational signage**, particularly in recreation areas and off-highway vehicle recreation areas.
- Expand and improve **off-highway vehicle recreation** facilities in underserved areas.

"We are sorely lacking parks and hiking trails, and land that is now undeveloped may not be for long."

— Public comment



Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area



Working Together to Serve the Central Valley



San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

We're all in this wonderful Central Valley together—citizens, communities, local, state and federal government, public, private and not-for-profit organizations. Providing outstanding park and recreational services to Central Valley residents and visitors takes the effort of many partners. All of us play an essential role in preserving California's priceless natural, cultural and recreational resources.

California State Parks looks forward to continuing to work with our many partners to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California. We must continue to think and work collaboratively and strategically; together we can maximize the benefit for all Californians.



Lake Oroville State Recreation Area

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www.parks.ca.gov/centralvalley



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

